

## Veterinary Medicine Loan Repayment

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*To require prioritization of large and mixed animal practitioner shortages in rural communities, and disallow the U.S. Department of Agriculture from diverting funds appropriated for the loan repayment program to the Food Safety Inspection Service for other purposes.*

### Background

A number of recent journal articles have raised concerns about the growing shortages of food supply veterinarians and the increasing demand for their services. Continuing shortages of veterinarians have the potential to lead to catastrophic economic and human health problems for our country.

The National Veterinary Medical Services Act (NVMSA) authorized the creation of an educational loan repayment program for veterinarians willing to serve in veterinary shortage areas considered vital to national agriculture, food security and public health. NVMSA was signed into law in December of 2003 and, although funding has been appropriated for its implementation over the last two years, USDA has yet to implement the program.

The Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service (CSREES) recently transferred NVMSA appropriations to the Food Safety Inspection Service (FSIS) to replace FSIS funds in a pre-existing loan repayment program for Federal employees.

Language is currently included in the Senate bill (Sec. 7003, Veterinary Medicine Loan Repayment) to require implementation of the loan repayment program within 270 days.

This amendment would further require that funds appropriated for NVMSA are actually spent implementing the program designed to address veterinary shortages in rural areas, and not existing programs designed for Federal employees. It would also require USDA to prioritize large and mixed-animal practitioners.



**Food animal concentration per food animal veterinarian. Source: AVMA**